



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

JANUARY 26, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Cortney Kirk	Designated Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Frank Valdes	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Heidi Cron	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Tim Talun	Member	<i>Present</i>	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Co-Chair Sarah Lewis at 6:03pm and adjourned at 9:08pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: New Members

The Commission welcomed two new members - Heidi Cron and Tim Talun. The new members briefly introduced themselves.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes Approval

The meeting minutes, November 23, 2020 and December 22, 2020, were not distributed to the Commission members. Following a motion by Chair Lewis, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to continue to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS: Amendment of the UDC's Rules and Regulations

Mr. Bartman provided a review of updated Rules and Regulations to allow for coordination with language, clarifying submittal requirements, and provide appropriate rules addressing previously approved Plan Unit Development projects under the previous ordinance.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to accept the amended Rules and Regulations.

DESIGN REVIEW: 67 Broadway

Anne Vigorito, attorney, introduced the project of an adult-use cannabis retail store addition to the medical use facility in the former garage to the rear of the property.

Bruce Hampton, architect, noted that the 5-bay garage was only used as storage for the medical use space. The proposal changes the existing openings of overhead doors to a storefront, one added wall sign, and logo sign in the stucco.

Mr. Hampton presented four design options. Option 1 was a 9 square grid of windows; Option 2 took transom mullion through storefront, Option 3 changed the color of the stucco, and Option 4 was a combination of transom and color.

The Commission and the applicant discussed the curb cuts, the possible unsafe pedestrian access, the lack of effective screening between the site and its neighbors, the dumpster placement, and the lack of landscape maintenance on site for the last 3 years. Mr. Hampton agreed to report the lack of landscape maintenance to ensure it will be taken care of.

They also discussed possibly moving the entrance of the adult-use section of the building to allow for a safer walk. However, Mr. Hampton stated that they had considered moving the entrance to the front of the building, but to keep the vault in a secure location and to keep things moving efficiently, they decided the entrance was best at the rear.

The Commission also discussed the Zoning requirements for adult-use storefronts and fact that they do not allow visibility into storefronts. Mr. Hampton stated that he is in licensing discussion with the Cannabis Control Commission to potentially have a storefront, if there is no visible product for public way.

The Commission and applicant continued the discussion about the potential for unsafe conditions for pedestrians. Designated Co-Chair Kirk recommended painting lines in the parking lot for a pedestrian walkway, which could create safer pedestrian access.

The Commission agreed that they would like to see a revised site plan before moving forward.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Cron, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to continue to the next scheduled meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED to 02/09/21

DESIGN REVIEW: 73 Summer Street

Nick Ogonowsky, TRAX Development, presented the proposal. Ryan Noone, Ryan Spragg, and Dartagnan Brown, Embarc Studio, were also present.

The building is currently an abandoned gas station at corner of School Street and Summer Street. The applicants discussed the abutting buildings, the zoning district, the massing details, and the floor plan. They touched upon the proposed underground parking, setbacks, and the open spaces.

Natalie Adams, landscape architect from Verdant, presented both the public & private green spaces. Ms. Adams showed various materials and plantings, as well as fences. She noted that the building is proposed to have a Green Score of .29, when only .25 is required.

The applicants acknowledged the seasonal high groundwater on the site, which is why the ground floor was raised to 5'10". They spoke about the height of the residential levels & the underground parking level, as well show examples of building materials and massings.

The applicants presented 3 options. Option 1 was a 3 story mostly brick building with a darker 3rd floor. It had high density fiber cement board to break up the brick façade with the vertical structure articulated. All of the bays are single story with decks above to allow for outdoor space along the street edge. There was a difference in height in the cornice detailing between the 2 building materials. Option 2 had a chamfered corner with gray precast and high density fiber cement material emphasized at the corner with brick at the ends. Some bays were single story, some were double. It showed a more successful use of window types between volumes. Option 3 was similar to Option 2, but it had varied colors and detailed more modern bays. It also had vertical brick piers at the end elements. It proposed wrapping the rear with high density fiber cement board and clapboard. There were also Juliet balconies along School Street.

The sidewalk setback requirements, the Green Score, public access to the outdoor amenity space, and the air intake and venting intentions were all discussed by the Commission, Staff, and the applicants.

The Commission was in agreement on level of detail of the entire presentation and the 3 options presented. The Commission members were in support of Option 3, with some possible changes. They offered options such as raising the parapet even further, adding wood as a building material, adding the balconies to this option to add life out onto the street, and altering the brick columns to enhance the design. The applicants confirmed that their team also preferred Option 3.

Following a motion by Member Cron, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend Option 3 with comments.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to continue the discussion to the next meeting. The applicant will only target the recommended changes. Additional materials are due the Friday before the meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED to 02/09/21

DESIGN REVIEW: 5 Middlesex Avenue; XMBLY Block 21

Member Arbaugh recused himself.

Staff reminded the Commission that this requires more of a final design review for guidance that must be included in the design, rather than initial options under new ordinance.

Ed MacDonald, BioMed Realty, gave an intro to the BioMed mixed-use development plan.

Gautram Sundaram, Perkins & Will Architects, spoke about the key principles of the Master Plan to continue the street grid from Assembly Row, the focus on open space, and active uses lining the streets and park. He noted that there will be 3 lab/office buildings in Phase 1/Block 21. He looked at a series of massing options – “stack”, “fold”, & “shear” – breaking down the office building mass. He touched upon the ground plane of the public realm in totality.

Sean Sanger, Copley Wolfe, spoke about the opportunity to celebrate street edges and emphasize the spaces between the tree groupings for seating. The plan is to green up Road K, including areas perpendicular to the building. On the corner of Roads K & L, they will create a temporary landscape that still works with existing landscape, which will also be integrated into the final design of the full civic space. They plan to increase the sidewalk by narrowing the travel way and include planting strips for

storm water. On Middlesex Ave, it shows raised separate bike lanes, but they plan to have a separator for delineation.

Mr. Sundaram spoke about the active ground plane with transparency shown in the renderings. They noted the terraces at the 2nd level to increase activity on the street, retail spaces at the ground floor, and the fire station with a celebrated stair tower. The shear option was chosen to articulate the mass of the building with openings and terraces.

The Commission & the applicant discussed the streetscapes presented, civic spaces, bicycle parking, crosswalk length, and the timeline of the project. The applicant team expects at least 2 years for Phase 1. They noted that the temporary landscape will be transformed into a permanent space once the next phase occurs. Therefore, they plan to use planters for trees in this phase, until they can be planted into the ground in the next phase.

They also went through all the public vs tenant space on the ground floor of the buildings. They discussed how the terraces on the second floor are a strong urban feature.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0-1), with Member Arbaugh abstaining, to recommend that the design move forward to Site Plan Approval with the guidance incorporated into the recommendation. This motion includes the commercial building and the parking garage building with the fire station.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.